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THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF  
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# Cyber-bullying from a socio-ecological perspective: A review of evidence from cross-national data

Findings from *EU Kids Online*

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# A socio-ecological framework of bullying



## Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979)

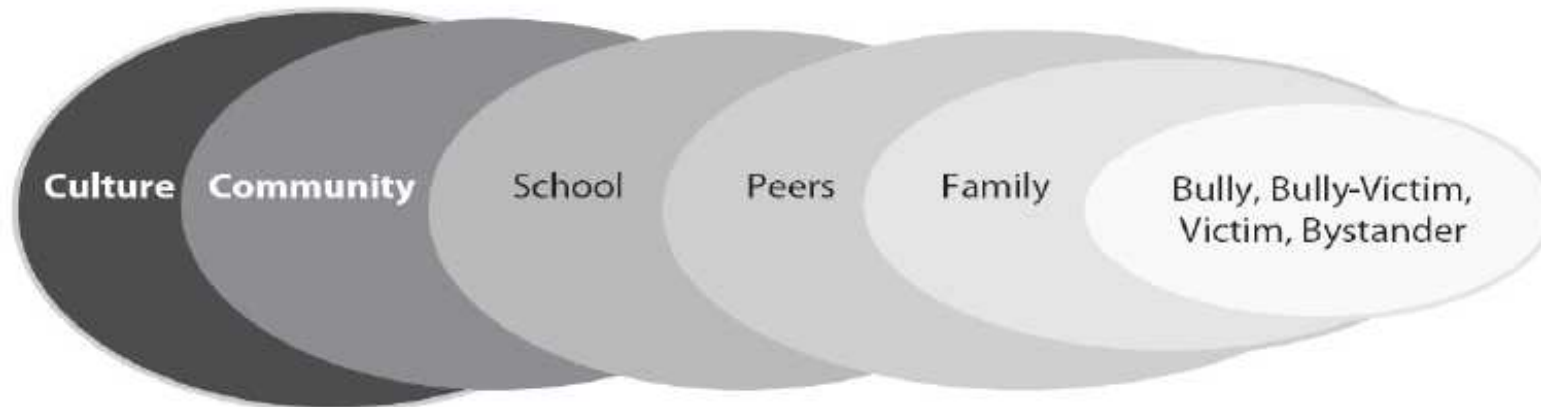
- Human behaviour

Interaction of individuals and their wider social environment

## Socio-ecological framework of bullying (Swearer & Espelage, 2011)

- Bullying behaviour

Linked with factors on different levels of the environment



Source: Swearer, S. M., & Espelage, D. L. (2011). Expanding the social-ecological framework of bullying among youth: Lessons learned from the past and directions for the future. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in North American schools* (2nd ed., pp. 1–10). New York: Routledge.

# A socio-ecological perspective on cyber-bullying



## ■ Links with different levels suggested by recent reviews

(Aboujaoude et al., 2015; Kowalski et al., 2014; Livingstone and Smith, 2014; Smith, 2015)

## ■ Individual level

- Age, gender
- Psychological problems
- Internet use
- Perpetration, victimisation, online and offline bullying

## ■ Social level

- Vulnerable populations (e.g. children, sexual minorities)
- Social support (parents, peers)
- Positive school climate

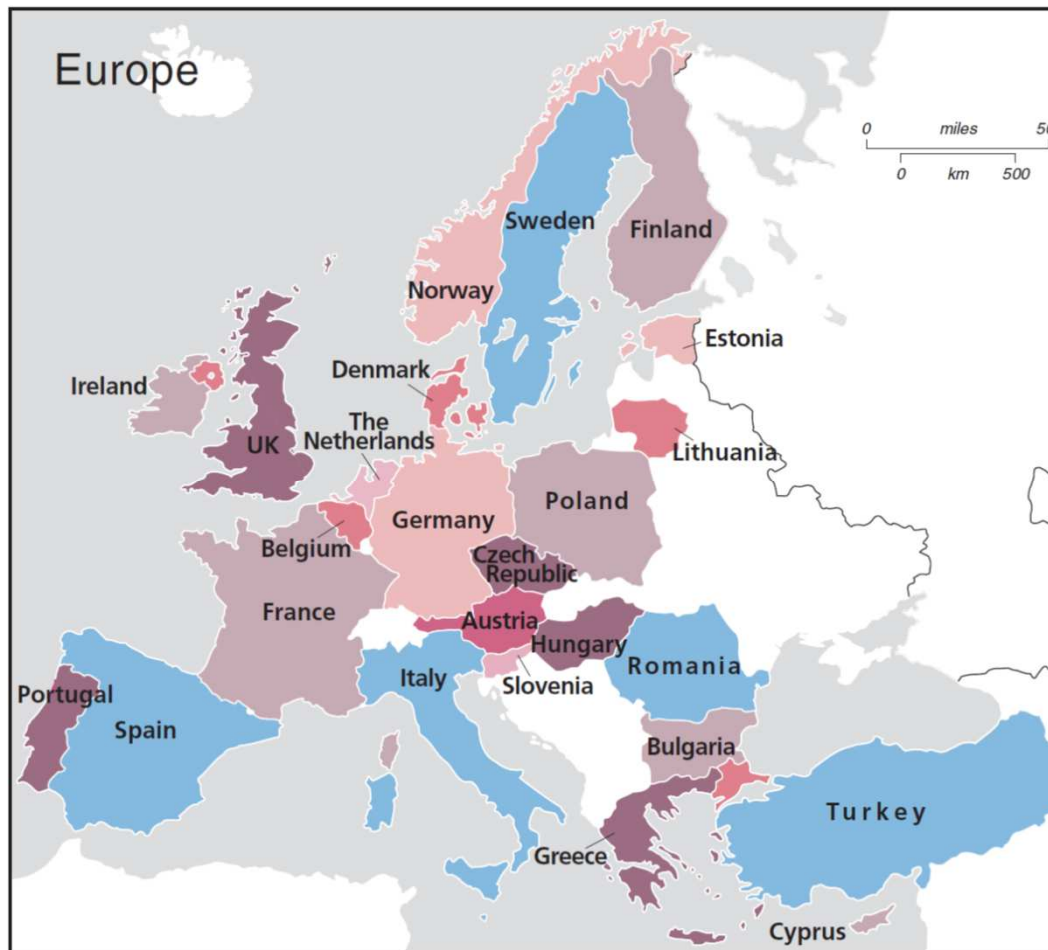
## ■ Cultural level

- No findings so far...

## Aims:

- **Apply the socio-ecological perspective in the context of cyberbullying**
- **Synthesise findings from the cross-national survey data of the EU kids online II project**

# EU Kids Online II: Surveying 'Europe'



- Random stratified sample: ~ 1000 9-16 year old internet users per country; total of 25142 internet-users, 25 countries
- Fieldwork in spring/summer 2010; child + parent interviews at home, face to face
- Questions validated by cognitive/pilot testing; self-completion for sensitive questions; care with research ethics
- Informed by national stakeholders and an international advisory panel
- Survey covered access, use, activities, risks (sexual images, sexual messages, bullying, meeting strangers), parental mediation, coping, vulnerability

# METHOD

# Procedure



## ■ Source: inclusion criteria

- Academic outputs available in January 2015 (e.g., scientific articles, presentations on conferences, or book chapters)
- Data on cyber/bullying from the EU kids online project
- English language

## ■ Coding

- Socio-ecological levels (individual, social and cultural)
- Specific factors for each level
- Two coders (authors)

## ■ Synthesis

- Socio-ecological level (individual, social and cultural)
- Specific factors for each level
- General patterns and conclusion

# Defining Cyber-bullying



**Saying or doing hurtful or nasty things to someone. This can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time, for example.**

**This can include:**

- teasing someone in a way this person does not like
- hitting, kicking or pushing someone around
- leaving someone out of things

**When people are hurtful or nasty to someone in this way, it can happen:**

- face to face (in person)
- by mobile phones (texts, calls, video clips)
- **on the internet (e-mail, instant messaging, social networking, chatrooms)**

**online bullying**



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**cyber-bullying**

# Cyber-bullying Roles



In the PAST 12 MONTHS...

...has **someone acted** in this kind of hurtful or nasty way **to you**?

...**have you acted** in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty **to someone else**?

Cyber-victim

Cyber-bully

Cyber-bully/victim

# Cyberbullying: Risk and Harm



## Risk

The occurrence of an event which is associated with a probability of harm.

## Harm

Actual physical or mental damage as reported by the person concerned.

- Cyber-bullying

A. Risk: Being a victim (6%)

B. Harm: “How upset were you (if at all)?”

■ % Very   ■ % Fairly   ■ % A bit   ■ % Not at all



# Individual level factors



## ■ Demographic variables

- Age
- Gender

## ■ Psychological factors

- Self-efficacy
- Sensation seeking
- Ostracism
- Psychological difficulties

## ■ Internet use and activities

- Time and location
- Platforms and devices
- Online activities
- Risky online activities
- Excessive internet use
- Online persona

## ■ Internet skills

- Digital skills
- Beliefs about internet abilities

## ■ Other risk experiences

### A) Online risks

- Sending and receiving sexual messages
- Seeing sexual images
- Meeting new online contacts (online and offline)
- Personal data misuse
- Seeing negative user-generated content (NUGC)

### B) Offline risks

- Missing school lessons
- Getting drunk
- Having sexual intercourse
- Getting in trouble at school
- Getting in trouble with the police

## ■ Offline bullying

## ■ Bullying roles (i.e., victim, bully, bully/victim)

## ■ Coping responses

## ■ Harm

# Social level factors



## ■ Social background

- Socio-economic status
- Use of a minority language at home
- Member of a discriminated against group
- Considered to have a disability (e.g. physical, mental health or learning disability)

## ■ Parental factors

- General worries concerning their child
- Awareness about their child's experience of cyberbullying
- Awareness about their child's experience of something upsetting online
- Awareness of their child's internet activities (reported by the young person)
- Use of the internet
- Confidence in using the internet

## ■ Mediation of internet use

- Active mediation of internet safety
- Active mediation of internet use
- Restrictive mediation
- Parental monitoring
- Technical mediation

## ■ Social support (who the young person talked to)

- Upon cyber-victimisation
- After a bothering incident

# Cultural level factors

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- Cross-national differences in prevalence
- Cross-national differences in associations
- Country-level variable aggregates and linkage with external indicators

# RESULTS

# Results

**Table 1:** Factors associated with cyberbullying in research of EU Kids Online data by socio-ecological level.

Level	Victimisation	Perpetration	Harm
<b>Individual</b>	Gender (girls) Age (older) Daily internet use Time spent online Platforms (SNS, IM)  Data misuse Viewing web content with suicide and self-harm  Offline victimisation Cyberbullying Psychological difficulties Self-efficacy Sensation seeking Ostracism	Age (older)  Time spent online* Platforms (SNS)* Risky online activities* Internet ability beliefs* 'Online persona'* Excessive internet use  Viewing web content with self-harm Offline risks Offline bullying Cybervictimisation Psychological difficulties Self-efficacy Sensation seeking	Gender (girls)  Daily internet use (-)  Platforms (SNS, IM)   Offline victimisation (-)  Psychological difficulties Self-efficacy (-) Sensation seeking (-)
<b>Social</b>	Socio-economic status (lower) Minority language spoken at home Member of a discriminated against group Disability present Parental worries Parental internet use Parental mediation: Restrictive (-)	Socio-economic status (higher) Minority language spoken at home (-) Member of a discriminated against group Disability present	Socio-economic status (lower) Minority language spoken at home Member of a discriminated against group Disability present Parental worries Parental internet use (-) Parental mediation: Restrictive Internet safety Internet use (-) Technical
<b>Cultural</b>	Cross-country variation in associations were shown for: Age Gender Psychological difficulties Self-efficacy Time spent online Risky online activities  Cyberbullying  Association with a country's prevalence rate were shown for country aggregates of: Cyberbullying Attitudes towards equality (-) Religiosity (-) Crime rates Unnatural child deaths Mobile phone penetration	Cross-country variation in associations were shown for:  Risky online activities*  Cybervictimisation  Association with a country's prevalence rate were shown for country aggregates of: Cybervictimisation	Country clusters : 'high use, high risk'(-)

Notes: If not indicated otherwise the direction of association is positive and the reference group consists of not involved youth.

(-) indicates negative associations. \* indicates factors for which the reference group was offline bullying. The absence of listed factors either indicates that there was no research output or no association has been found. More complex patterns of factors and factors with ambivalent research results are not included in the table. Please refer to the corresponding paper sections for details.





# KEY FINDINGS

	Risk	Harm	Vulnerability Resilience
Gender	girls	girls	girls
Internet use (child, parent, country)	higher	lower	Internet use
Psychological difficulties	higher	higher	Psychological difficulties
Sensation seeking	higher	lower	Sensation seeking
Self-efficacy	higher	lower	Self-efficacy
Social disadvantage (low SES, minority, discriminated)	higher	higher	Social disadvantage
Restrictive mediation	lower	higher	Less restrictive mediation 18

# Victimisation

# Coping Responses

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## Generally...

- Fewer passive responses  
(e.g., hope problem would go away, stop using internet)
- More active responses  
(e.g., trying to fix problem, talk to someone)

## ....were associated with...

- Higher self-efficacy
- Higher digital skills
- Lower psychological difficulties

→ **Less vulnerability to harm online (Livingstone et al., 2011)**

# Victimisation, perpetration, online, offline...

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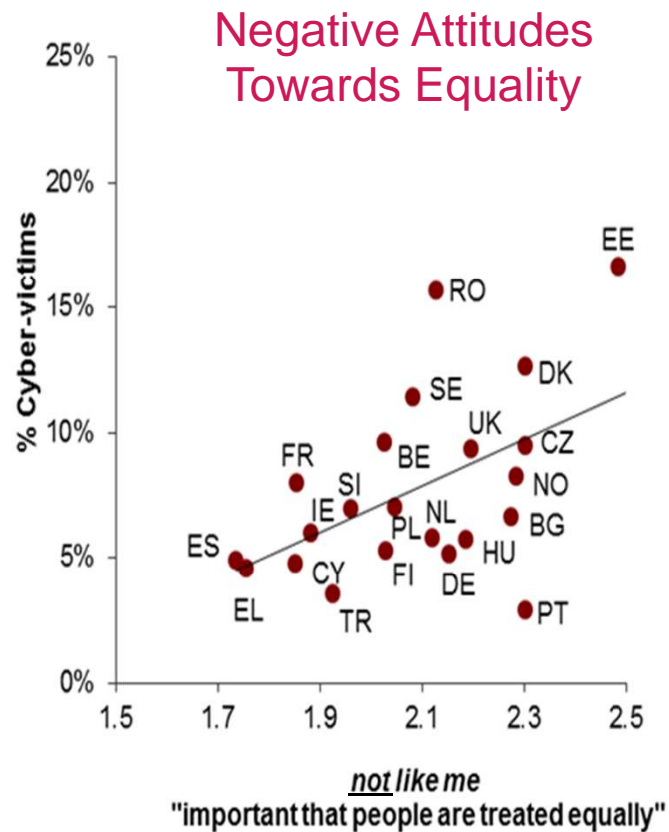
## ■ Victimisation and Perpetration go hand-in-hand

- Strongly associated (e.g., 60% of bullies have been bullied)
- Correlates are generally similar
- Exceptions - cyberbullies (as opposed to victims) showed higher:
  - online activities
  - digital skills
  - internet ability beliefs

## ■ Cyberbullying is generally associated with other risks

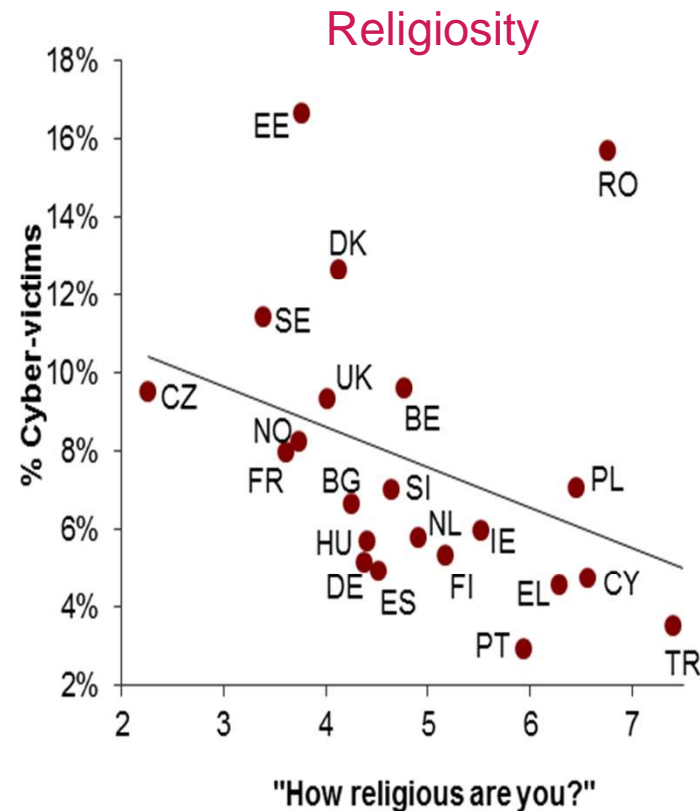
- Other online risks (e.g., sexting, meeting “strangers”)
- Other offline risks (e.g., school problems, alcohol use)
- Offline bullying

# Cultural level factors



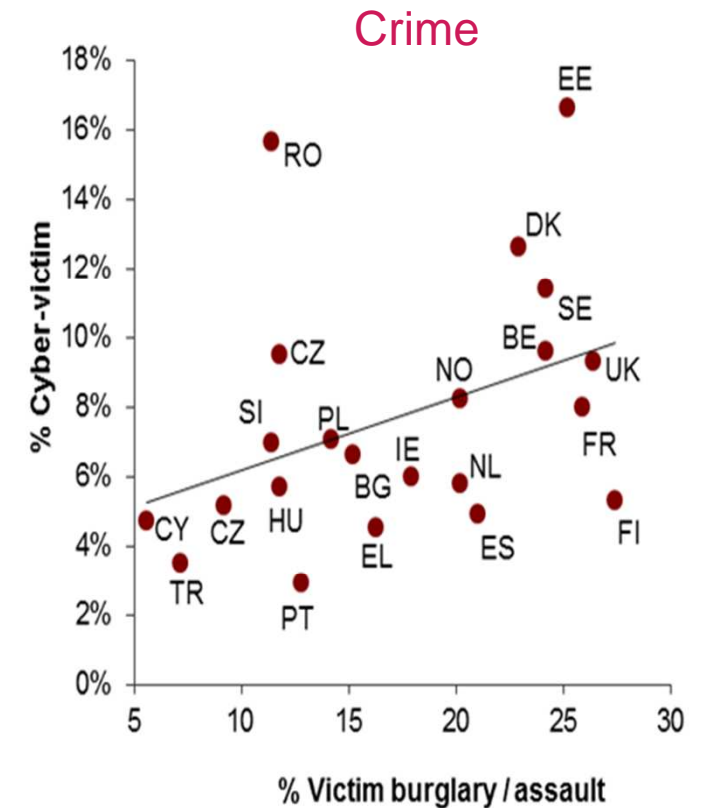
$$r = .51; p < .01$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{OR} &= 3.21 \\ \text{VPC} &= 4.7\% \\ (\chi^2(1) &= 5.49; p < .05) \end{aligned}$$



$$r = -.36; p = .08$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{OR} &= 0.84 \\ \text{VPC} &= 4.9\% \\ (\chi^2(1) &= 4.96; p < .05) \end{aligned}$$



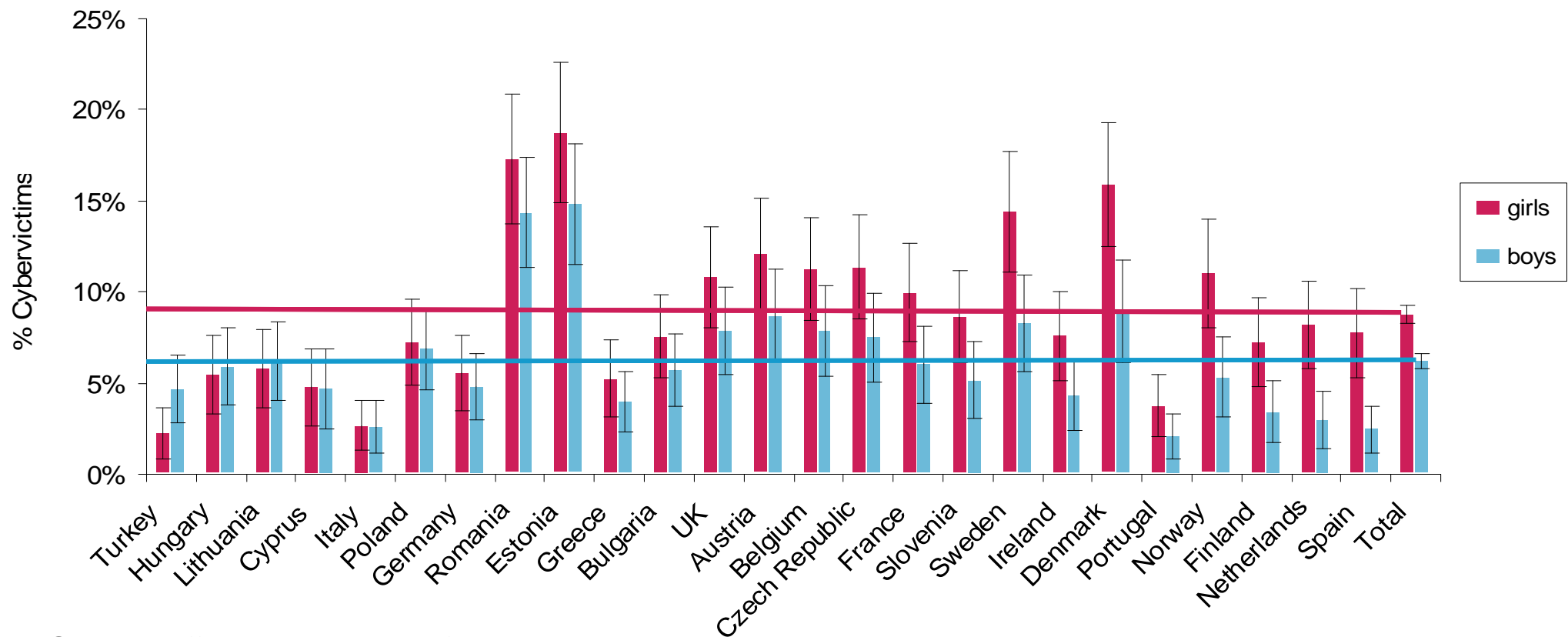
$$r = .39; p = .05$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{OR} &= 1.03 \\ \text{VPC} &= 5\% \\ (\chi^2(1) &= 4.57; p < .05) \end{aligned}$$

# Gender differences by country



Cyberbullying victims by country and gender



Gender differences are significant in

Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Spain

Note: Data are weighted.

# Conclusions



- **Vulnerability/resilience factors useful for prevention and intervention**
- **Integrated strategies for online and offline bullying**
- **Consideration of individual, social and cultural background**
- **Some predictors of risks are also predictors of resilience – and not harm (e.g., use and self-efficacy)**
- **Some youth are more vulnerable than others**
- **Policy initiatives should focus on those likely to experience harm:**
  - Girls, younger children
  - Psychological and social disadvantaged
- **Increase youth digital skills, coping and resilience**
  - Address socio-demographic groups differentially
  - Offer online opportunities
- **Consistency of findings suggests cyberbullying and correlates are for the most part universal**
- **Cultural variation needs more exploration and theoretically driven analyses**

# THANK YOU!

Görzig, A. & Machackova, H. (2015). Cyberbullying from a socio-ecological perspective: A contemporary synthesis of findings from EU Kids Online.

**Media@LSE Working Paper #36.**

London, UK: London School of Economics and Political Science.



Görzig, A. & Machackova, H. (in press). Cyberbullying in Europe: A review of evidence from cross-national data. In M. Wright (Ed.), **A Social- Ecological Approach to Cyberbullying**. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.



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